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CONAN THE KING
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DOCHERTY & BATOR

AS DAWN BREAKS IN ARGOS, THE CITY OF MESSANTIA IS IN FLAMES. KING XANTAUS AND QUEEN LEORA HAVE FLED THE FALLEN CITY, LEAVING CRASSUS TO FACE THE VENGEANCE OF PRINCE CONN. KING CONAN'S ARMY IS FERRIED ACROSS THE KHOROTAS RIVER TO MEET THE REMAINING ENEMY IN ONE LAST BATTLE FOR...

CONQUEST

GET ME A CHARIOT. I'LL FACE XANTAUS BEFORE SUN-DOWN.

PALLANTIDES, MOVE THE POITANIAN KNIGHTS TO THE BLUFFS. CUT OFF THE ENEMY'S ESCAPE ROUTE.

AYE, WE'LL MOVE SWIFTLY. THE ARGOSSEANS ALREADY HOLD THE HIGH GROUND.

DOCHERTY-BATOR

DON KRAAR STORY • MIKE DOCHERTY PENCILS • FRAJA BATOR INKS • JANICE CHIANG LETTERS • STEVE MELLOR COLORS • MICHAEL HIGGINS EDITOR • TOM DeFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

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COMMANDERS, FORM YOUR RANKS!

CONAN, WAIT! WE'LL HAVE THE MORNING SUN IN OUR EYES!

IF WE WAIT FOR THE SUN TO REACH ITS ZENITH, WE WON'T HAVE ANY FIGHT LEFT IN US, SERVIUS. TAKING MESSANTIA WAS A LONG NIGHT'S WORK.

AYE, KUAGA. I SAY, LET'S FORM RANKS AND FINISH MATTERS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

MORNING SUN OR NOT, LET'S HAVE AT THE DOGS!

BUT, CONAN, THEY'RE ON HIGH GROUND AND WE HAVE THE SUN IN OUR EYES!

I HEAR YOU, SERVIUS. YOU HAVE REASON, BUT *NOW* IS THE TIME!

FORM RANKS FOR THE CHARGE! WE'LL USE THE "HORNS OF THE CIMMERIAN BULL" FORMATION.

SOUND THE DRUMS! ADVANCE!

THEY INVADED *OUR LAND!* NOW THEY PAY!

LISTEN, LEORA. AQUILONIAN DRUMS! WON'T BE LONG NOW.

WE STILL HAVE A CHANCE TO ESCAPE.

ESCAPE TO WHAT?

YOU'VE GIVEN UP, XANTAUS. I GAVE YOU CREDIT FOR BEING A BETTER MAN THAN THAT.

I STILL HAVE ONE DREAM LEFT, LEORA--TO KILL CONAN BEFORE MITRA EMBRACES ME.

THEN MAKE IT COME TRUE--FOR BOTH OF US.

BY NOW CRASSUS MUST BE IN ARALLU. WE'LL GET NO HELP FROM HIM.

DON'T BE TOO SURE. THAT STYGIAN MAY BE MAD, BUT HE'S BOUND TO MAKE ONE LAST EFFORT TO TAKE CONAN OR PRINCE CONN WITH HIM WHEN HE DIES.

IN THE GROTTO BENEATH THE ROYAL PALACE IN MESSANTIA, PRINCE CONN CONFRONTS CRASSUS THE STYGIAN, OR WHAT WAS ONCE CRASSUS...

THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED TO SHOW ME, SORCERER?

AYE, I DELAYED THE LAST STAGES OF THE METAMORPHOSIS AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, MY DEAR PRINCE.

DEMON!

I'VE THROWN OFF THE LAST VESTIGE OF HUMAN FORM. BUT THERE IS ONE LAST STAGE...

CONN! CONN, GET AWAY FROM HIM!

...JUST ONE LAST STAGE BEFORE I TAKE MY REVENGE ON YOU AND YOUR FATHER.

RUN, CONN!

WARN MY FATHER, RUFIO! THERE'S NO RUNNING FROM THIS THING NOW!

CONN, I BEG YOU! HE'LL KILL YOU!

COME WITH ME, NOBLE PRINCE! THIS UNDERGROUND IS CRAMPED!

I *MUST* DO THIS! *WARN MY FATHER!*

YOUR FATHER AND HIS ARMY WILL WATCH ME KILL YOU...

WE'LL LEAVE THIS LABYRINTH BEHIND...

CONN!

NO!

... AND THEN I'LL TAKE *THEM!*

WARN THE KING, RUFIO!

AYE, MY FRIEND, IF IT'S THE LAST THING I CAN EVER DO FOR YOU.

... AYE, BEYOND THE LABYRINTH... BEYOND THE ROYAL PALACE, WHERE ALL CAN SEE YOU DIE!

I'LL CUT YOUR HEART OPEN, CRASSUS!

MITRA GUIDE ME TO CONAN! HE MUST KNOW!

YOU'LL BLEED TO DEATH, CRASSUS BEFORE YOU EVER REACH KING CONAN. I'LL SEE TO THAT IF IT COSTS ME MY OWN LIFE!

LOOK, BY THE GODS, IT'S A DRAGON!

IT'S AN OMEN THAT BODES ILL FOR SOMEONE, I'D SWEAR TO THAT.

I CAN'T LET CONN DIE!

CONN--HE'S STILL ALIVE, BUT FOR HOW LONG?

RUFIO, BY YMIR, WHAT KIND OF DEMON FLIES THROUGH THE AIR WITH A MAN IN ITS CLAWS?

THE DEMON IS *CRASSUS!* *THE MAN IS CONN*, DERYCK!

QUICKLY, THE KING MUST BE TOLD! CRASSUS SAID CONN WOULD DIE FIRST, *THEN HE'D KILL KING CONAN!*

YMIR'S CURSE! HOW CAN I TELL RADEGUND THAT I WATCHED HER BROTHER DIE AND WAS POWERLESS TO STOP IT?

HE ISN'T DEAD YET! HE STILL HAS HIS SWORD IN HIS HAND!

AYE, AND IF I KNOW CONN, THAT GIVES HIM MORE OF A CHANCE THAN IT WOULD MOST MEN!

LOOK, THE THING IS FLYING TOWARD THE RIVER!

THEN CONN MAY HAVE A CHANCE AFTER ALL!

COME, CONAN MUST BE TOLD.

CROM'S THUNDER, THE SPAWN OF ARALLU HAS TAKEN WINGS! IT'S GOT A MAN IN ITS CLAWS! THIS COULD BE A SIGN FROM THE GODS! IF ONLY ZELATA WERE HERE TO TELL US WHAT IT MEANS!

CONAN... CONAN! THE ENEMY IS WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE! WILL YOU GIVE US THE ORDER TO ATTACK?

WAIT! HOLD THOSE REINS!

I KNOW WHO THE MAN IS

WHERE IS MY SON, PALLANTIDES?

I SAW HIM LAST IN MESSANTIA.

NOW, I OK THE LOVE OF MITRA, WILL YOU GIVE THE ORDER TO ATTACK?

THAT THING IN THE SKY IS AN EVIL OMEN, PALLANTIDES. I CAN FEEL IT

NOT AS ILL AN OMEN AS THAT EITHER WE MEET THEM NOW OR THEY'LL DRIVE US INTO THE RIVER!

THEN MEET 'EM NOW WI' STEEL TO THE CHANGE!

LEAVE XANTAUS FOR ME! IT'LL BE DEATH FOR ANY MAN WHO TRIES TO CHEAT ME OUT OF MY REVENGE!

COME COMRADES! SPILL AQUILONIAN BLOOD!

HIGH ABOVE THE KHINATA'S RIVER NORTH OF MESSANTIA

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE GOES ON

. BETWEEN ENEMIES .

EACH BENT ON THE OTHER'S DESTRUCTION

A HUNDRED GOLD PIECES ON THE MONSTER! WHAT DO YOU SAY, CALIASTROS

I NEVER GAMBLE, BRAX-AL-THAR

THE ONLY WITNESSES TO THIS DEADLY ENCOUNTER ARE ABOARD THE ROYAL BARGE, TRAVELING UPRIVER, BOUND FOR THE KINGDOM OF KOTH

AS PRINCE CONN DESPERATELY FIGHTS FOR HIS LIFE, CORINTHIAN MAGIC, AND BRAX-AL-THAR, THE WARLORD OF KOTH, LOOK ON INDIFFERENTLY...

UNTIL CONN DELIVERS THE DEATH STROKE!

THERE--

I'LL WAGER MY SWORD THAT THE MAN DIES WHEN HE HITS THE WATER, CALIASTROS

THAT'S A WAGER I'LL TAKE, BRAX EVEN A MAGICIAN SHOULD ACCEPT A WAGER FROM TIME TO TIME

SO YOU'RE TAKING UP GAMBLING NOW, CALIASTROS?

I ACCEPTED A WAGER, BRAX I SAID NOTHING ABOUT GAMBLING

THE CREATURE, BROKE THE MAN'S FALL!

CAN YOU TELL IF THE MAN LIVES?

SO FAR I CAN'T TELL ANYTHING, MASTER'

WAIT.

HOW CAN YOU BE SO CERTAIN, CALIASTROS? DOES YOUR MAGIC GIVE YOU THE POWER TO FORETELL A TOSS OF THE DICE?

THERE ARE WAYS, AS I SAID. I ACCEPTED A WAGER, BUT I NEVER GAMBLE. AND I KNOW ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE A SIGN FROM THE GODS.

HE LIVES! A SIGN FROM THE GODS!

I OWE YOU MY SWORD, CALIASTROS

IS HE STILL BREATHING?

AYE, MASTER, JUST BARELY.

KEEP IT, BRAX. IT WILL SERVE *ME* BEST AT *YOUR* SIDE

AND *WE* MAY BE USEFUL TO US AS WELL.

MASTER, LOOK-- ANOTHER ONE!

CRASSUS THE STYGIAN XANTAUS AND LEORA TOLD ME ABOUT HIM.

I SAW A *MONSTER* FALL FROM THE SKY *WHO* IS THIS?

CRASSUS WAS ONCE MY PUPIL, A PROUD, VAIN FOOL WHO DARED MAGIC BEYOND HIS SCOPE.

HE'S DEAD, MASTER

BRING HIM ABOARD *WE* MAY BE USEFUL TO US, TOO.

JUST AS WELL BUT I AM DETERMINED TO INVESTIGATE ALL THIS.

ON THE FAR BANK OF THE KHOROTAS RIVER, LATE IN THE DAY, WITH MOUNTING CASUALTIES, KING CONAN'S ARMY DRIVES THE ENEMY FROM THE FIELD...

CONAN... CONAN, WAIT! WE'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU

REIN IN THE HORSES, SOLDIER! I WANT TO HEAR WHAT PALLANTIDES AND SERVIUS HAVE TO TELL ME THEN, WE FIND XANTAUS!

OUR SCOUTS HAVE FOUND XANTAUS ON THE APPROACH TO A MOUNTAIN TRAIL.

HE WON'T ESCAPE-- WE'LL HAVE HIS HIDE!!

THEN RIDE ON AND WE'LL FOLLOW YOU! WE'LL MAKE EVERY ARGOSSEAN ON THE FIELD KNOW WHAT IT COSTS TO INVADE AQUILONIA-- JUST BEFORE WE PUT THEM TO THE SWORD!

ON THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL THAT WINDS ALONG THE PEAKS AND LEADS BEYOND THE BORDERS OF ARGOS KING XANTAUS WAITS LIKE A MAN SENTENCED TO DEATH ..

I CAN SEE THE DUST CLOUDS BELOW LEORA THEY RE AFTER US

AT LEAST WE WON'T DIE ALONE, MY LOVE ISN'T THAT RIGHT?

LEORA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

STAND ASIDE OR I'LL RIDE YOU DOWN LIKE THE WHIPPED DOG THAT YOU ARE!

I'M NOT BEATEN AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO DIE ANY TIME SOON!

JUST WATCH ME, YOU BEATEN CUR!

LEORA, YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME!

LET GO OF THAT REIN OR I'LL FLAY THE HIDE OFF OF YOU!

LEORA · NO!

I SHOULD HAVE POISONED YOU A LONG TIME AGO. I WOULD HAVE IF I HADN'T NEEDED YOUR TROOPS.

LEORA, I BEG YOU..

A KING NEVER BEGS. DON'T YOU KNOW THAT?

...DON'T LEAVE ME! I CAN'T FACE DEATH ALONE!

FOOLS DESERVE TO DIE ALONE, XANTAUS

BEG CONAN IF YOU LIKE, BUT I'LL WAGER HE WON'T LIKE IT ANY MORE THAN I DO!

LEORA, YOU VIXEN! MITRA'S CURSE ON YOU FOR THE HARLOT THAT YOU ARE!

FAREWELL LEOKA MAY THE VULTURES PICK *YOUR* BONES AS WELL AS MINE

AND AS FOR NANAHE WOLL DON'T ACCEPT RANSOM FROM ME EVEN IF I HAD ANY TO OFFER HIM

KING XANTALIS, COME QUICKLY AND LOOK!

CONAN'S FORCES HAVE BEEN ON HIS TRAIL FOR TWO DAYS THEY'LL BE ON US LIKE A PACK OF HOUNDS

WHERE? SHOW ME.

THE ENEMY ALL RIGHT

AYE, MY LIEGE, I KNOW A TRAIL

ON THE APPROACH TO THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL...

I HEAR YOU AS KING, BUT THIS TRAIL IS TREACHEROUS IF I LOSE A WHEEL OR BREAK THE AXLE OF THIS CHARIOT, XANTAUS WILL BE OUT OF REACH FOR GOOD!

FASTER, SOLDIER! I WANT TO GET MY HANDS ON XANTAUS'S THROAT BEFORE THE SUN SETS!

ARKRRG...HHHH

CROM'S BLOOD!

DON'T WASTE ANY MORE ARROWS HE'S DRIVEN THE CHARIOT OUT OF RANGE

IF I HAD JUDGED THE WIND BETTER I WOULD HAVE PUT THAT SHAFT THROUGH CONAN'S THROAT MY LIEGE

GO ON AND DRIVE I WANT TO PUT AS MUCH DISTANCE BETWEEN CONAN AND US AS WE CAN THEN WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER CHANCE TO PUT AN ARROW IN HIM

AYE, KING XANTAUS THERE ARE PLACES ON THE TRAIL WHERE WE CAN LURE HIM TO HIS DEATH.

MY KING, WE'VE [illegible] THE RIVER [illegible] CONN BUT TH[illegible] SIGN OF H[illegible]

KEEP LOOKING-- ALL OF YOU! I WILL FINISH XANTAUS BY SUNSET, I SWEAR IT

FIND MY SON! I ONLY HOPE YOU FIND HIM ALIVE SOMEONE MUST INHERIT MY CROWN

[illegible]

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO ARGUE PERYCK! FIND CONN!

RUFIO DON'T LET HIM GO ALONE!

CONAN! CONAN! IN THE NAME OF CROM, WAIT FOR ME!

THE REST OF YOU, FOLLOW ME! WE'LL SEARCH FOR CONN THROUGH THE NIGHT! NO ONE SLEEPS UNTIL HE IS FOUND!

CONAN... CONAN... WAIT!

MITRA DEFEND US FROM HEADSTRONG CIMMERIAN MONARCHS!

YOU NEED A DRIVER, KING CONAN!

ALL I NEED IS A CHANCE TO GET MY HANDS ON XANTAUS.

THEN I'LL INCREASE THE ODDS FOR YOU!

SOMEONE HAS TO DRIVE THIS CHARIOT WHILE YOU KILL XANTAUS.

YOU'RE RIGHT, BLAST YOU!

GET IN!

TAKE THE REINS!

ARE YOU IN PRACTICE WITH AN ARGOSSEAN JAVELIN, MY KING?

NO, RUFIO! BUT GET US CLOSE ENOUGH TO THEM ON A STRAIGHT STRETCH OF THIS TRAIL AND *I'LL GET IN PRACTICE!*

AYE IT WILL BE MY PLEASURE

USE THE WHIP, RUFIO! GET ME WITHIN RANGE FOR A JAVELIN TOSS!

WE'RE CLOSING IN ON THEM

I'LL GIVE YOU A JEWELED SIGNET RING IF YOU CAN PUT A SHAFT IN CONAN'S HEART!

JUST LET THIS DUST SETTLE AND I'LL EARN THAT RING.

XANTAUS, TURN AND FACE ME LIKE A MAN!

KING CONAN IS A BROAD TARGET, EVEN IN A MOVING CHARIOT!

GIVE ME THE REINS, SOLDIER, AND READY YOUR BOW!

AYE, KING XANTAUS, YOU'LL SEE MY SKILL WITH A BOW NOW.

THERE'S YOUR ANSWER, MY LIEGE!

THE COWARD!

WHIP UP THOSE HORSES, RUFIO! GET ALONG SIDE OF HIM!

I'LL PUT AN ARROW THROUGH ONE OF HIS EYE SOCKETS.

THEN FOR THE LOVE OF MITRA, HURRY!

CLOSER, KUFIO!

I MEANT WELL TO HOLD THE TRAIL WHILE WE DODGE THEIR ARROWS

BY CROM, CLOSE IN ON HIM- I'LL SARROT HIM WITH THAT BOW STRING!

I HAVE ALSO TILL HANDLE THAT ARCHER

JUST STAY STILL A MOMENT, CONAN AYE THAT'S IT

HERE'S SOMETHING YOU CAN PLAY WITH IN ARALLU!

XANTAIS!

LOOK OUT FOR THE EDGE OR WE'LL BE OVER THE SIDE TOO!

YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE WHIP!

XANTALUS, YOU'RE A FEAR MAN

I CAN SMELL THE FEAR IN HIS SWEAT NOW!

I'VE GOT YOU NOW, ARGOSSEAN!

RUFIO--TAKE THE OUTSIDE WHILE YOU CAN!

DO AS I SAY OR I'LL DRIVE THIS THING MYSELF!

HE'LL DRIVE US OFF THE EDGE!

XANTALIS, YOUR HORSES ARE EXHAUSTED! FACE ME, MAN TO MAN!

I'LL CHOOSE MY FIELD OF BATTLE, CONAN!

BUT, YOU HAVE THE CHOICE OF WEAPONS!

THEN LET'S HAVE IT, DOG!

HOLD ON, CONAN! THIS TRAIL WINDS LIKE A STYGIAN ADDER!

DON'T LET HIM USE HIS WHIP ON OUR HORSES OR WE'LL BE OVER THE SIDE!

AGHEEEEEE...

CAN'T TAKE IT, XANTAUS!

WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED!

YOU'LL NEVER FINISH IT, YOU BARBARIAN SCUM!

YOU'RE MINE!

NO, CONAN!

I'M TWENTY YEARS OLDER THAN YOU, XANTAUS. CAN'T YOU KILL AN OLD MAN WITH YOUR BARE HANDS?

I . . I'LL KILL YOU ONE WAY OR ANOTHER! THAT . . IS ALL THAT MATTERS!

YOU'LL *NEVER* KILL ME, XANTAUS

CONAN...CONAN, JUMP CLEAR OR WE'LL BE OVER THE EDGE!

AS SOON AS I FINISH THIS CHORE, RUFIO.

WE'LL ALL GO OVER AT ONCE, BIG MAN!

QUICKLY CONAN! THE TRAIL ENDS UP AHEAD!

I HEAR YOU, RUFIO! HOLD ON!

I WILL FINISH THIS!

CR-RAC RAG-RAG KRAK

YOU RE FINISHED XANTAL! THE DAY IS MINE!

GET OUT HERE! IT'S TOO LATE!

I WILL, NOW THAT I'VE FINISHED WITH MY CHORES!

AYE, I HEAR

...I HEAR AND OBEY!

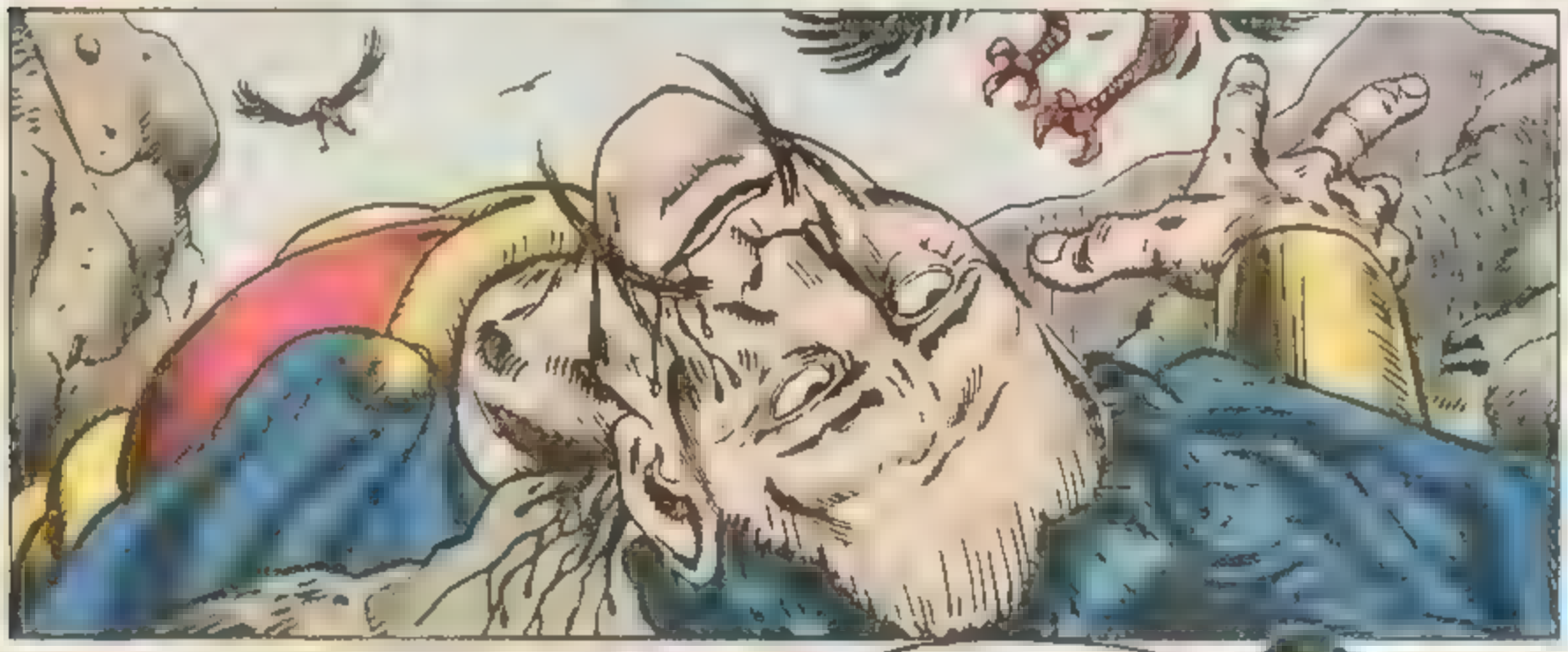
WHOA! BY YMIR AND CROM, WHOA!

ANOTHER HAIR'S BREADTH AND I'D BE FOOD FOR THE WORMS TOO!

THE VELTUREES AREN'T WASTING ANY TIME

YOU'D THINK THEY'D SHOW A LITTLE MORE RESPECT AFTER ALL KANTAGH-RAW DID FOR THEM. WHEN THEY WERE WEAK AND NOW THEY BITE THE HAND THAT FED THEM

THEY'RE WELCOME TO THAT



FAR FROM HOME AND ALONE, THE ARCHITECT AND HIS QUEEN FACED THE HORDE OF ALIEN CREATURES AND THEIR LEADER, KANTAGH-RAW. ALONE AND OUTNUMBERED, THEY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT.

CROCK!

THEY CAME AT THE QUEEN

CALIASTROS AND BRAX-AL-THAR OFFERED TO HELP ME, *IF I EVER NEEDED IT.* THEY'LL PROTECT US.

WELCOME TO THE FOLD, LEORA I KNEW THERE'D BE A TIME WHEN YOU'D COME TO ME

IN ANY EVENT MY DEAR LEORA, WE ARE OVERJOYED THAT YOU DECIDED TO GRACE US WITH YOUR PRESENCE OVERJOYED INDEED

THIS IS A LAST RESORT, BRAX BUT I'LL MAKE CONDITIONS YOU CAN DEPEND ON THAT

CRASSUS! SO, 'THE BLOOD OF THE SERPENT' WAS THE DEATH OF HIM HE LOOKS LIKE HIS [illegible] SELF NOW, NOT LIKE THE LAST TIME I SAW HIM

IT MAY BE THAT YOU CAN HELP ME TO INTERPRET A SIGN FROM THE GODS, MY DEAR. COME BELOW AND WE'LL SHOW YOU.

TODAY WE SAW A DRAGON AND A MAN FALL FROM THE SKY INTO THE KHOROTAS TWO MEN CAME TO THE SURFACE - ONE ALIVE AND THE OTHER ONE DEAD YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF

THEN I WILL, BRAX AND THEN YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT ALL OF THIS IS ABOUT

I HAD HOPED THAT WE MIGHT REACH SOME CONCLUSION TOGETHER, SINCE WE ARE *ALLIES*

CALIASTROS, DO YOU REALLY EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT THERE IS SOME ARCANE SIGN THAT YOU CANNOT DIVINE?

"THE BLOOD OF THE SERPENT"! OF COURSE! SO, THE OLD FOOL DARED TO ATTEMPT THAT SPELL. IT KILLS ITS MASTER.. HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER!

BUT DEATH DIDN'T COME FROM ANY MAGIC, CALIASTROS. WE SAW THE YOUNG WARRIOR DRIVE HIS SWORD INTO THE DRAGON'S BELLY TIME AND AGAIN.

YOU SAY A WARRIOR SLEW A DRAGON IN THE SKY AND THEY FELL INTO THE KHOROTAS? TWO MEN CAME TO THE SURFACE--ONE DEAD, ONE ALIVE--

JUST WHO IS THIS WARRIOR?

THERE! HIS ARMOR BORE THE STAMP OF THE ARMORER OF THE ROYAL HOUSE OF AQUILONIA DO YOU KNOW WHO HE IS?

PRINCE CONN, CONAN'S ONLY SURVIVING SON! I'VE ONLY SEEN HIM FROM A DISTANCE, BUT THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

WE HAVE A VALUABLE HOSTAGE, CALIASTROS

HE'S EVEN MORE HANDSOME THAN I REALIZED. MANY SAY THAT HE IS HIS FATHER'S EQUAL.

BAH! HE'S LITTLE MORE THAN A STRIPLING! SAVE YOUR TENDER GAZES FOR A MAN WHO APPRECIATES YOU, LEORA--A REAL MAN!

TRUE, HE COULD BE VERY USEFUL. BUT YOUR MAGIC WON'T BE ENOUGH TO BEND HIM TO OUR WILL. WE'LL NEED SOMETHING MORE...

HE COULD BE MORE THAN A HOSTAGE. HE COULD BE JUST THE WEAPON THAT WE NEED TO DESTROY CONAN. JUST THE THOUGHT OF TREACHERY LIKE THAT APPEALS TO MY TENDER SENTIMENTS

WHAT [illegible]

DAWN ON THE BATTLEFIELD ACROSS THE RIVER FROM MESSANTIA...

HAIL CONAN! THE PRIDE OF ARGOS IS ON THE FUNERAL PYRES! VICTORY IS OURS!

SPARE ME, PALLANTIDES! WHERE IS MY SON?

I HAVE TO KNOW IF CONN IS ALIVE OR DEAD!

WE SEARCHED ALL NIGHT FOR HIM, CONAN. IF HE HAD DROWNED, THE KHOROTAS WOULD HAVE GIVEN UP HIS BODY BY NOW.

IS THERE NO ONE WHO CAN TELL ME WHERE MY SON IS?

ISN'T IT TIME YOU ASKED HADRATHUS, GREAT KING?

AYE, CONAN. ISN'T IT TIME THAT YOU ASKED THE GODS?

GO ON, HADRATHUS. I MUST KNOW.

THEN THE GODS WILL REVEAL IT THROUGH *THE HEART OF AHRIMAN*, KING CONAN.

HE LIVES, MY LIEGE, BUT HE IS NOT AT LIBERTY.

WHO HOLDS HIM CAPTIVE?

CALIASTROS--THE SAME SCORPION THAT MURDERED MY OLD MASTER, KING AECHIDES OF CORINTHIA.

IF HE LIVES, HE CAN BE *RANSOMED*, OR *RESCUED*, CONAN.

AYE, BUT NEVER MIND THE RANSOM, DERYCK. I'VE HEARD OF CALIASTROS BEFORE. THE ONLY THING HE WANTS IS POWER.

FAR UPRIVER ON THE KHOROTAS...

PRINCE CONN STILL SLEEPS, LEORA.

NOT FOR LONG, CALIASTROS. I HAVE A RARE TURANIAN PERFUME THAT WILL AWAKEN ANY MAN. AND THEN I'LL NEED THAT POTION YOU PROMISED ME.

THAT'S FETCHING ATTIRE, LEORA. THAT'S THE SORT OF THING I LIKE TO SEE YOU IN!

I DIDN'T PUT IT ON FOR YOU, BRAX.

IS IT READY YET, CALIASTROS?

THAT IT IS, LEORA. A FEW DROPS OF "THE WATERS OF FORGET-FULNESS" IN SOME WINE... AND A MAN CAN BE MADE TO FORGET HIS *LINEAGE*, HIS *LOYALTIES*, AND HIS *HONOR*.

THAT WILL DO FOR A START. BUT I HAVE A STRONGER SPELL TO USE ON HIM...

...AND I INTEND TO WORK IT. "THE WATERS OF FORGETFULNESS" CAN CAUSE A MAN TO BE ENSLAVED BY THE KISS OF THE FIRST WOMAN HE TOUCHES UNDER ITS SPELL. BUT IT MUST BE NO ORDINARY WOMAN.

HA, HA, HA! TRUE ENOUGH, MY LITTLE MINX! THERE'S NO MAGIC LIKE A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.

BAH! MAY SET TAKE YOU ALL AND YOUR SORCERY!

BREATHE DEEPLY, MY PRINCE. NO MAN CAN RESIST THE SCENT OF THE TURANIAN JASMINE THAT I WEAR.

NO MAN CAN RESIST MY CARESSES--OR MY LIPS.

THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS YOU WANT TO ASK.

DRINK DEEPLY AND I'LL ANSWER THEM.

"WHO AM I?"--THE ONE WHO ADORES YOU.

"WHO ARE YOU?"--MY LOVER.

"WHAT IS OUR DESTINY?--TO CONQUER, JUST AS WE HAVE CONQUERED EACH OTHER.

KING CONAN

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Attention correspondents: If you don't want your full address printed, please be sure to tell us so!

Fellow War-Hawks:

This saga that you started in issue #28 is really good. I just finished covering the Napoleonic Wars at college. This war, which is devastating the upper Hyborian continent, is comparable to Napoleon III's efforts to dominate Europe. Except that the shoe is on the other foot—where Napoleon was the aggressor, Conan was the defender. I think you guys should create a special map of the upper Hyborian continent, dictating where the events and action took place, by numeral. Then, on the key, there would be an explanation as to what happened.

An example could be as follows: Issue #28 could be written on a red circle showing enemy movement (the picts) in the Aquilonian territory. Then, on the next page, you could give a brief description of what occurred. Issue #29 would then show the movement of Conan's legions as they repel the invaders and kill Shooz D'nij, the Pict leader. This could probably be done best after the Conanic Wars are over.

It could be a CONAN THE KING Annual, or perhaps a one-shot deal entitled "The Conanic Wars." This is the best war that I have come across in all my Conan readings, and I have all the items Marvel has published and fifty books written by Robert E. Howard and others. But no other war has devastated the Hyborian continent such as this one. Involved in the war are Aquilonia (right now holding the advantage), Pictland (defeated), Menedia (surrendered), Argos and Ophir (retreating), Zingara (absorbed into the new Aquilonian empire), Asgard (allied with Aquilonia by the royal wedding of King Deryck and Princess Radegund), Kush (sending reinforcements to the mercenaries fighting for Aquilonia(, and Stygia (whose priesthood seems to have started the whole war). It would be a good idea to have a list of who was on whose side, who won, and the new boundaries of the winners. This would hardly be Aquilonia's first emperor. After all, Aquilonia absorbed Poitain, Gunderland, and the Marshes of Bossonia, just to mention a few.

My college professor stated that a kingdom is a land area within a certain boundary, while an empire had control of land outside its boundary. If all these provinces had been absorbed into Aquilonia proper, then there would be no empire. But with Zingara and any other territories Conan would win from the conquest of Nemedia and Pictland, he would have to be crowned emperor. Similarly to Strabonius of Koth. The Conanic Wars could also cover the Treaties signed after the War and the gaining of land by the victor. Land will have to be swapped. Just look at the Congress of Vienna, in 1815, that gave land to everyone after France was conquered. Or, review the peace treaties of both world wars.

You have made the war interesting and realistic, now finish it off the right way. If you don't want to redraw the map (I hope you will though), then the defeated can pay war reprisals. Come on, get the rest of the continent involved. You still have at least ten kingdoms sitting idly by, while a major war is rocking through the continent.

Basically, I would like you to cover the aftermath and effect of the war more thoroughly when the war is over.

Otherwise, between college, work, and a social life, I am a very satisfied reader.

Sincerely yours,
K.B.

As a matter of fact, K.B. our maps are being re-done. They won't be exactly the way you described them, but they will be more detailed and easier to read. The new maps will appear first in SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN and CONAN SAGA, out this fall!!

Dear Sirs, Madams, Creatures of the Netherworlds, and Demons of Aralu,

In response to the absurd comment made by one Stephen Hill of Madison, CT . . .

I am a fairly new reader of CTK but I still found myself almost offended . . . yes, *offended* by the comments he made in issue #39 about a "really boring war" and " . . . I *liked* this comic better when . . ."

Notice the *past tense* used in this second quote!

Anyone who can't stick out a plot line for any length of time must be—oh, I forget people must have an attention span longer than that of an orc to stay enthusiastic.

Now, you must remember that Conan is a king now and kings don't go around killing and looting. He's respectable now, with a family to think of. Although I must admit he's slowing down on the action a little bit, he's got to keep up foreign relations with Belverus and the rest of his neighboring adversaries. Thus, he can't go running across the countryside killing every monster he sees.

I would, however, in the distant or even near future, like to see Conn replacing his father in the swordplay and having a barbaric good time.

Jim Wickens
Angus, Ontario

Well said, Jim, and thanks for your input. You see Conn doing a bit of the ol' cutting and slicing in this story, and also the following issues.

Greetings, Dog Brothers,

This is my first letter to you. I hope you will forgive my long-windedness. I am a great fan of Conan. So much so, in fact, that I have just ordered the entire line of SAVAGE SWORD and CONAN THE BARBARIAN from Mile High Comics.

In CONAN THE KING, the current situation is an expanding war between Aquilonia and its allies, and Argos, Ophir, and Zingara; and according to issue #40, maybe Corinthia as well. This *might* lead to the intervention of Turan. As we know, Turan's leaders are longtime enemies of Conan.

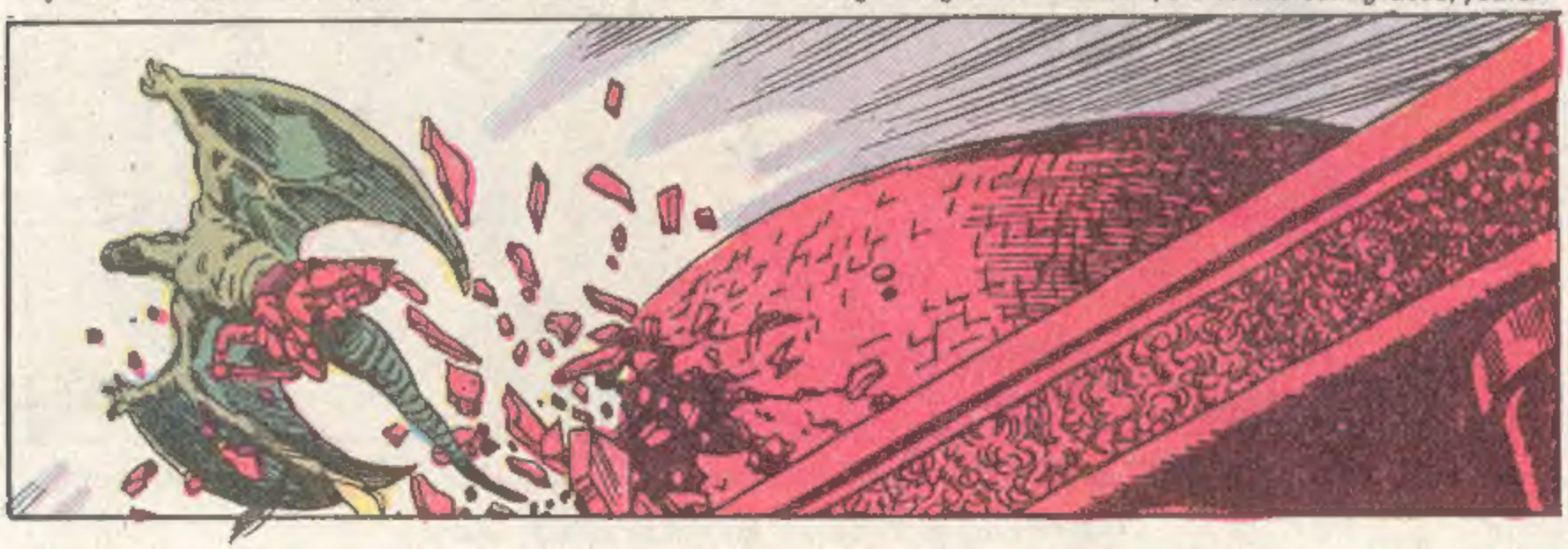
In issue #40, King Conan is trying to capture the Kodavian fleet, in order to attack Argos by sea. This would be wise if Argos was a great distance away, but it is right next door to Zingara. Considering logistics, a land attack would be far better, unless you are thinking of a two-front attack, which would hurt your logistics even more. And, in the light of Conan's era, his communications between the two fronts would be all but nil. Not to mention the pirates, freebooters, and the Crimson Brotherhood, all of which Conan's seaforces *might* come into contact with.

In current issue of CONAN THE BARBARIAN, you have a warrior named Mad Simeon. I don't know if you are going to kill him off in a future story, but if you don't intend to, why not bring him back to help King Conan, who could use another lieutenant now that Gaius Flavius has fallen.

As I said, I *am* long-winded. And it did seem to take a long time to write it, too!

Fredrick Coff
New York City

Well, Frederick, it didn't take very long for us to read it and put it in the letter column, did it? Interesting ideas, yours.



BULLPEN BULLETINS

QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"Petey, Pig 'o My Heart! Marry me! Hug me! Squeeze me the way a fashion-conscious water buffalo should be squeezed!"

—MARY JANE WATER BUFFALO
MARVEL TALES #208

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH!

After guiding Marvel Comics to dazzling new creative heights for the past nine and a half years, *Jim Shooter* has stepped down from his position as the Editor in Chief. Unquestionably one of the most talented creative people in the entire comic book industry, Jim was always spearheading the development of new formats, new concepts and exciting new comic book series! (Like The 'Nam! X-Factor! Power Pack! The Punisher! New Mutants! And others!)

Marvel produced its very first Graphic Novels, Limited Series and "Direct-Only" comics under his superb editorial leadership. His accomplishments are too numerous to list here. Suffice it to say that he will be missed.

THE NEW ORDER BEGINS . . .

Our new Editor in Chief is none other than *Two-Fisted Tom DeFalco* . . . A man who needs no introduction to Marveldom Assembled! (But who will be real miffed if he doesn't get one!)

The subject of one of our Bullpen *Pro Files* a few months back, Tom is a fifteen-year veteran in the comics biz. Since he joined Marvel in 1980, he served as the editor of our *Spider-Man* line of comics and later as the writer of such popular series as *The Amazing Spider-Man, Machine Man* and *Firestar.* As our Executive Editor, he also helped establish Marvel's *Star Comics* line.

We're sure you join with us in wishing Tom the best of luck in his new job!

Pro File on: MARK GRUENWALD

Editor on: *AVENGERS, WEST COAST AVENGERS, SOLO AVENGERS, IRON MAN, OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE Deluxe and Trade Paperback Editions*
Marvel freelance credits (past): *Scripts: SPIDER-WOMAN, MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE, THOR, BIZARRE ADVENTURES, HAWKEYE Limited Series, SQUADRON SUPREME Limited Series*
Marvel freelance credits (present): *Scripts: CAPTAIN AMERICA, D.P. 7*
My place of birth is: *Oshkosh, Wisconsin*
My hobbies are: *Playing with my daughter Sara's toys, amassing a videotape library, and doing "butt-dives" into inner tubes at Ralph Macchio's pool*
If they were making a movie of my life, I'd like to see my part played by: *Edward James Olmos*
The single work which I am most proud of is: *SQUADRON SUPREME #2*
My oddest habit is: *I'm a neatness freak and I constantly force the people who work with me to clean up their clutter.*
The reason I got into comics was: *So I could write stories as good as the ones that got me hooked on the medium when I was a kid.*
People who knew me in High School thought I was: *Going to go far, preferably as far away from them as possible.*
My greatest accomplishment outside the comics field is: *Winning the Cresskill, New Jersey Butt-Diving Championship for the past two years*
My favorite performers are: *Talking Heads, the Three Stooges, and Shintaro Katsu*
The last good book I read was: *THE DISCOVERERS by Daniel J. Boostrum*
The last good movie I saw was: *RAISING ARIZONA*
The biggest influences on my work include: *Stan Lee, Gardner Fox, and Philip K. Dick*
My greatest unfulfilled ambition in the comics field is: *To write CAPTAIN AMERICA forever.*
The worst part of my job is: *Saying goodbye to my daughter every morning.*
When nobody's looking I like to: *Rearrange my office.*
The one thing I really want the world to know about me is: *I'm the hardest working editor in the business today.*

CHECKLIST

- ☐ **DAREDEVIL #248** — Turning point!
- ☐ **NEW MUTANTS #57**
- ☐ **WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #32** — Continuing the six-part epic that runs through *all three Spider-titles!* Part Four begins here, courtesy of J.M. DeMATTEIS, MIKE ZECK and BOB McLEOD!
- ☐ **WEST COAST AVENGERS #26**
- ☐ **STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI #12** — The citizens of earth believe that the Strikeforce has turned traitor!
- ☐ **CONAN THE KING #43**
- ☐ **X-MEN ANNUAL #11** — Guest-starring Captain Britain, focusing on Wolverine, and featuring the menace of the Horde! Face it, true believer, this one has it all! Written by CHRIS CLAREMONT with art by ALAN DAVIS and PAUL NEARY!
- ☐ **THE HOUSE II** — It's the official Marvel adaptation of the hit horror movie! Written by RALPH MACCHIO! Art by ALAN KUPPERBERG!
- ☐ **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #294** — The penultimate chapter of Spidey's battle with Kraven the Hunter!
- ☐ **CAPTAIN AMERICA #335** — The *new* Captain America and Bucky go on their first mission!
- ☐ **FALLEN ANGELS (Limited Series) #8**
- ☐ **STRANGE TALES #8** — Featuring Cloak & Dagger and the dark side of Dr. Strange!
- ☐ **ALPHA FLIGHT #52** — With Wolverine!
- ☐ **HEADMASTERS (Limited Series) #3** — The Decepticons themselves become Headmasters!
- ☐ **SPIDER-MAN DIGEST #6** — Reprinting *Amazing Spider-Man #68–70*, by STAN LEE and JOHN ROMITA, SR.
- ☐ **AVENGERS #285**
- ☐ **INCREDIBLE HULK #337** — Guest-starring X-Factor!
- ☐ **MARVEL TALES #205** — Reprinting *Marvel Team-Up #69*, by CHRIS CLAREMONT and JOHN BYRNE.
- ☐ **PUNISHER #4** — The Punisher gets shot!
- ☐ **SILVER SURFER #5** — Obliteration!
- ☐ **X-MEN #223** — Featuring the Freedom Force!
- ☐ **G.I. JOE #65** — The Joes get their own Space Shuttle!
- ☐ **MARVEL SAGA #24**
- ☐ **CONAN THE BARBARIAN #200** — It's a special double-sized anniversary issue, guest-starring Red Sonja!
- ☐ **FANTASTIC FOUR #308**
- ☐ **IRON MAN #224**
- ☐ **THE 'NAM #12** — Marks writes a letter home to his folks.
- ☐ **PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #132** — At last! The incredible conclusion!
- ☐ **THOR #385**
- ☐ **X-FACTOR #22** — There's an enemy in X-Factor's midst! Who is it?
- ☐ **CLASSIC X-MEN #15** — Reprinting *X-Men #108* by CHRIS CLAREMONT and JOHN BYRNE! Plus, the origin of the Starjammers!
- ☐ **POWER PACK #33** — Featuring a pair of Fallen Angels!
- ☐ **TRANSFORMERS #34**
- ☐ **PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #7** — Peter and Mary Jane are honeymooning in the south of France! Let's join them!
- ☐ **TRANSFORMERS DIGEST #6** — Reprinting issues #11–12 of their comic.
- ☐ **X-MEN INDEX #4** — With all the answers to all your questions about issues #87–93, with a couple of surprises!

MARVEL MAGAZINES

- ☐ **MARVEL AGE #56** — Special issue about G.I. Joe! Also, more info about everything you see here!
- ☐ **MARVEL FANFARE #35** — Featuring Part Two of "The Warriors Three," by ALAN ZELENETZ and CHARLES VESS!
- ☐ **SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #141**
- ☐ **CONAN SAGA #8** — Reprinting more of those great adventures from the early issues of Conan's comic book! Stories by ROY THOMAS. Art by BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH.
- ☐ **ROBOCOP #1** — He's half-man, half-machine. . . .but he's all cop! Don't miss the official Marvel movie adaptation of this action-packed thriller!

MARVEL BOOKSHELF

- ☐ **G.I. JOE ORDER OF BATTLE PAPERBACK** — At last! All four issues of the *Order of Battle* in one handy volume! With special updates and new material!
- ☐ **MARVEL UNIVERSE TRADE PAPERBACK #6** — Here's the latest volume of the *Deluxe Edition of the Handbook of the Marvel Universe*, all ready for your library! This edition covers everyone from Radioactive Man to Shitman!
- ☐ **THE BIG CHANGE: THE THING AND THE HULK** — This is the Graphic Novel you have to see to believe! It's a totally off-beat adventure featuring Marvel's two heaviest hitters — the Thing and the Hulk! And it was written and drawn by two of the heaviest hitters on the creative end of comics — JIM STARLIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON! Hey, this Graphic Novel is so intense that we can't tell you any more about it! You'll have to see it for yourself, and you won't be disappointed!
- ☐ **MOEBIUS: ARZACH AND OTHER FANTASY STORIES** — The second volume of the deluxe Moebius series from Epic Comics features the world-famous adventures of Arzach, the Pterodactyl-riding warrior. As a special bonus, five pages of never-before-seen Arzach art are included! Other stories include the autobiographical fantasy, "The Detour." A fine addition to your library of mature fantasy literature.